

The University of Chicago

**THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF
VLADIMIR SOLOVYEV**

**A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDI-
DACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

1936

By

WILLIAM HENRY DUNPHY

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PREFACE

The conception of All-unity, $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$, is the central thread in the philosophy of Solovyev. For example, in connection with the problem of knowledge, Kant had pointed out that neither empirical facts taken by themselves nor the discursive activity of reason in itself would ever yield knowledge; and Kant's successors had tried to overcome the antinomy bequeathed by him between the thing and the thing-in-itself, not with great success. Solovyev sees the need of surmounting all forms of mere immanentism in knowledge and finds the possibility of knowledge in universal participation in the Absolute, by virtue of which the object becomes immanent in the knowing subject, alike in the phenomena of the senses and the forms of rational activity.

Solovyev's philosophy of history centers about the conception of the progressive embodiment of the Absolute in the forms of creation, overcoming the disruptiveness of nature and humanity, without destroying their reality and autonomy. This all-unifying process which does not obliterate, but rather perfects the individual, attains its crown and goal in Christ, the God-man, who breaks down all barriers between God and man as well as between man and man, and finally (by His resurrection and triumph over death) between spirit and nature. The Church is meant to continue this reconciling, all-unifying work, this process of God-manhood, through the penetration of all things by the Spirit of Christ.

The moral and social philosophy of Solovyev likewise revolve about this conception of All-unity and culminate in the thought of a divine, all-embracing fellowship in which the tension of the individuals and society are transcended. Sancta Sophia, supernal Wisdom, is the word by which Solovyev expresses this All-unity, and its crowning attribute is Love.

The writer takes this occasion to express grateful acknowledgment to Professor Edwin E. Aubrey of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago for his assistance and direction in the preparation of this dissertation and to Dr. Victor Dowdell

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CHAPTER VII
PHILOSOPHY OF EVOLUTION AND GOD-MANHOOD

God-manhood,--the union of God and man through Christ, opening up to every man the possibility of becoming divine, and more than that the possibility of all creation being redeemed and entering into the very life of God,--is the central conception in the philosophy of Vladimir Solovyev. It is closely connected with his thought of all-unity, of God as the one that embraces and contains all, and man as a second or becoming absolute.

It is not absolute being that presents a puzzle to our reason and demands explanation, but relative being. The created, finite world of nature presents such a mass of contradictions--it contains no true reality, taken in itself; its processes have no purpose in themselves and if we are to find the goal of nature (if any) we must look beyond nature; it lies under the dominion of conflict, disruption, and death; in short, as the Apostle John sums it up "the whole world lieth in evil."¹

The source of this evil, as we have seen, lies in the apostasy or "fall" of the World Soul from God. Falling from God, it could no longer mediate the order and harmony of God to the world; its own elements in turn fell under the sway of discord and confusion, of mutual strife and antagonism, of which death is the supreme example. The World Soul was not content to receive divinity as a gift, to have it as from God, but wished to assert itself, to attain divinity in its own name, and for itself. This is reflected in the world-process as a whole, in the evolutionary struggle. Each basic element in the world tries to be all, not by participating in the all-unifying fulness of life of the Absolute, but by setting up itself in opposition to all, trying to thrust aside or devour the rest. Thus space, as we know it, is created--each of the elements sets up its exclusive claims

¹Collected Works (2d ed.; St. Petersburg, 1911-14), III, 120, 351 ff. Cf. I John 5:19.

and masters a portion of space for its own, so to speak; but by shutting out the rest, so far as it can, it is correspondingly shut up in the poverty of its own life, instead of sharing the absolute wealth of all-unity. So too every blade of grass, every insect, every animal, strives to be all, and we get the fatal struggle for existence, ruthless competition--everywhere division, confusion, discord, disruption, death. Such is the state of the fallen world--the reign of sin and death, and such its state must continue to be till it finds the way back to the original all-unity, to the Absolute.¹ Evolution, which on its darker side, expresses the results of separation from the Absolute, on the upper side expresses the gradual return of the World Soul to the divine principle, made possible by the down-reaching, gracious activity of the latter.²

But the world could not be united to the Absolute unless there were some link between the two. Such a link is man, who is both a god and nothingness,--nothingness in respect to his origin, a god in respect to his goal, a becoming absolute. Man expresses for the lower natural world its idea sense and significance. In the sub-human world, the absolute divine element in the World Soul, that is to say all-unity, exists only potentially in a blind, unconscious striving; in man it becomes self-conscious. The sub-human world is marked by the triumph of the partial; in man all-unity receives actual (though as yet only ideal) form, that is, in consciousness. The task of natural man is to gather the whole world together in consciousness; though natural man is unable to gather it together in reality. Man's consciousness is a form of all-unity, as we have seen. "In man the World Soul finds itself, realizes itself, as a synthesis of the universal and the partial."³ The individual and the universal are united in man; in man nature is reborn and passes in consciousness into the sphere of the divine. In man, the World-Soul again becomes self-conscious. Man too is free, both in God and over against God. In short, he is the link between the two worlds, the relative, natural, temporary world, and the absolute, divine, eternal world,

¹Works, III, 141 ff.

²Ibid., III, 305 ff., 351-66.

³Ibid., II, 319 f. Cf. E. Trubetskoy, The World-View of V. S. Solovyev (Author's edition, Moscow), I, 326.

the world of *Σοφία*.¹

Lower creatures have only one principle of life, the natural; they are subject to the law, the idea, the Logos through necessity. Not so with man, who is made in the image and after the likeness of God. Man is thus the mediator, the link, the means of the embodiment of God in the world.²

How can we be sure that man has this lofty place? Why should not a higher being than man arise? Solovyev answers: '

No further perfection may lead us beyond the limits of the human world; man possesses a universal form of consciousness, capable of being filled with a universal content; he is capable of indefinite self-expansion while remaining man; of infinite self-perfection in receiving the fulness of absolute content. Only new degrees of progress are possible for him.³

Man then is the medium or instrument of the humanization of God; through him all creation, of which he is the epitome and apex, may be brought into union with God. Human personality is already in a sense absolute--in a negative sense--it cannot and will not be satisfied with any relative limited content, it seeks complete fulness of being and absoluteness in the positive sense, and is confident it can attain them. From the nature of all-unity, man cannot attain fulness of being in isolation, still less can he create it by his own efforts; it can be attained only through a perfect mutual interpenetration of all creatures united in love to one another and to God. This attainment, too, cannot be mechanical, it must be free, the free response of a universal love for all creatures and for God. As it progressively moves toward this attainment, the partial and manifold elements of the world--disrupted by the fall, and thus separated from the World Soul, from one another, and from God--gradually become one whole--the Absolute. They share by participation in the fulness of life of the Absolute; in other words, the World manifests itself as a becoming Absolute in contrast with God, the eternally existing Absolute.⁴

Thus love, and the corresponding renunciation of exclusive

¹Works, II, 319-23, and III, 121. Cf. La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1922), pp. 256f, 267ff.

²Works, II, 323. Cf. La Russie, pp. 265 ff.

³Works, III, 19 ff.

⁴Ibid., pp. 147 ff.

self-assertion, is the indispensable condition of attaining to union with God and sharing the absolute content of His life and blessedness. This leads not to self-annihilation, but to self-realization, in the truest and fullest sense, as the Gospel puts it, we have to lose our life in order to gain it.¹ The path of egotistic, exclusive self-assertion, on the other hand, far from leading to fulness of life, leads to subjection and slavery to nature, which itself has fallen under the bondage of corruption. The outward expression of this exclusiveness is the coarse, mutually exclusive corporeality which matter has taken, permitting of outward relations only and not of inner unity and mutual penetration. This is simply the outward sign and embodiment of the inner Spiritual division and discord. The relations of such creatures are largely composed of ruthless competition, the struggle for existence. Disappointment and suffering inevitably result since this path can never lead to fulness of life, which is attained only in all-unity, and the end of this path is death.²

We have seen in a previous chapter that Solovyev holds a dynamic theory of matter--amply confirmed by modern physics--and understands the quality of resistance or impenetrability as due to the interaction of monads, the forces of attraction and repulsion. The breaking up of the atom in no way militates against Solovyev's conception, in its essence; on the whole the theory of the electron and of matter as energy and movement fits in better with his view than the old atomism, as generally conceived.

Man's task is consciously to renounce the path of exclusive self-assertion, which finds its expression in the coarse corporeality of fallen nature and the struggle with his fellows, and to subject himself to God, as the source and goal of his life, to overcome sin and evil in all its forms, and to further the entrance of all creatures along with himself into the path of all unity, the union of all beings with one another and with God. But man cannot "pull himself up by his hair," he needs a higher power, divine grace, to enable him to rise himself toward God and lift up nature to Him.

¹Mark 8:35.

²Works, III, 142. Cf. pp. 307 ff.

We have seen that the model and archetype of exclusive self-abnegation is to be found in the very nature of God Himself as Trinity. Each of the divine persons freely renounces the power of exclusive self-assertion, and thus realizes perfect goodness, truth, and beauty in inner and complete unity with the other two persons. And this love which constitutes the inmost nature of God is reflected in His relation to the world.¹

It was this love which made possible the emergence of the world-manifold, and which is reflected in all the positive expressions of its existence. In accordance with this origin, it is only in all-unity, the wholeness of all, that the multitude of created beings can enter into fulness of life. Only by forming one single whole, one living universal organism, can they truly realize themselves. The all-unity which is forever realized in God "reveals itself as the all-pervading rationality of the world, so that this rationality is the direct expression or Word (Logos) of the Deity, the manifested and active God." Even in the fallen condition of the world, rational meaning is not altogether lost: all creatures have a dim, instinctive impulse or longing for an all-embracing unity, this common longing transcends the limits of each separate thing and person, and as the "World Soul" constitutes the universal, inner life of all that exists. The world-manifold still remains, in a sense, a single organism, though its organic character is imperfect, due to the fall. "Through a free act of the World Soul, the world which it animates fell away from God, and broke up into a number of hostile elements; through a long series of free acts the multitude of rebellious elements must be reconciled to one another, and to God, attaining in its regeneration the form of an absolute organism."²

At the lowest stage, the parts of the world-manifold are bound together by an external law, by the force of gravitation and mechanical necessity. By degrees, however, as the result of a slow evolutionary and historic process, they come to form an absolute organism, an inward all-unity. That organism exists, in the eternal, ideal, divine sphere--as we have seen; Sancta Sophia is the name which best sums it up--and the Logos is the

¹Ibid., III, 95, 109 ff. Cf. La Russie, p. 230.

²Works, III, 356 ff.

center of that absolute organism. The embodiment of Sophia in the world of the conversion of the relative unity of the world into the perfect inner, organic unity of an absolute organism can be achieved only through the free, harmonious co-operation of the divine principle and the World Soul. Just as the falling away of the World Soul and the resulting condition of the world was due to a free act, so must its return and restoration be a free response to God's loving activity. This is true all along the line of the upward evolutionary movement of creation toward God in response to the downward movement of God toward creation, and culminates in the Incarnation, that is to say the act by which the Divine Logos, who has never forsaken the world, descends into the stream of events in space and time in the person of Jesus Christ and "from being the center of eternity becomes the center of history."¹

Since the reality of the spiritual is inseparably connected in human experience with the reality of the material, the process whereby the universe attains perfection, being the process of manifestation of God in man must necessarily be the process of manifestation of God in matter. The upward march of life and the evolutionary process has manifested itself in five kingdoms: the mineral or inorganic, the vegetable, the animal, the human (that is, the naturally human), and finally the spiritually human kingdom or the Kingdom of God.² Each kingdom is built on the one immediately below it, and is conditioned by it; on the one hand, each kingdom ministers to the higher and conditions it, but does not create it--creation does not lift itself by its own bootstraps. Nothing is lost in this ascent--life is built upon existence, consciousness upon life (without destroying it), rationality upon consciousness, spirituality upon rationality (without destroying it). Nothing is lost in this process,--the lower is not destroyed but fulfilled in the higher, just as, on the other hand, the higher is not created but conditioned (and in a sense anticipated) by the lower. Just as a living organism consists of chemical substance which has ceased to be mere substance, so natural humanity consists of animals who have ceased

¹Ibid., p. 163. Cf. La Russie, pp. 241 f., 248 ff. Cf. Works, III, 355 ff.

²Works, VIII, 210.

to be mere animals, and the Kingdom of God consists of men who have ceased to be merely human, but have entered into a new and higher plane of existence where their purely human objects become the means and instruments of another, final purpose.¹ (Degeneration is possible, all along the line--the organism may die, reverting to a lower, inorganic state; and when a human being desires nothing but the satisfaction of his hunger and sex impulses, he is rightly called bestial, as reverting to a lower stage.)

The stone exists; the plant exists and lives; the animal, in addition to this, is conscious (at least in a rudimentary way) of its life in its states and correlations; the natural man, existing, living, conscious of life also is aware of general ideas and gradually becomes aware of a general meaning of life as well,--he has the power of grasping the all-embracing, all-uniting truth, and reaches after it.

"The power inherent in the very nature of reason and of language to grasp the all-embracing truth, has acted in many different ways in various and separate people, gradually building up the human kingdom on the basis of animal life. The ultimate demand of this human kingdom is the ideal demand for the perfect moral order," i.e., for the Kingdom of God. Jews and Greeks approached this idea (and with it the ideal of the God-man) by different routes (i.e., prophetic inspiration and philosophy). "Parallel to this double inner process, but rationally more slow than it, was the external process of bringing about political unity and unity of culture" throughout the known world, completed by the Roman Empire. In the Greco-Roman world, natural humanity reached its highest level, and rose to the idea of the absolute man, the man-god. The idea of man-god is one which demands embodiment, but which man alone cannot achieve. The man-god is the anticipation of the God-man. "As the ape was the forerunner of man, so the deified Caesar was the fore-runner of the Christ."² The man-god, moreover, even though lord of the whole world is but an empty dream; the God-man can reveal His true nature even in the guise of a wandering rabbi.³

¹Ibid., pp. 210-12.

²Ibid., pp. 213-16. Cf. III, 365.

³Ibid., VIII, 216.

The historical existence of Christ, as well as the reality of His character recorded in the Gospels, is not open to serious doubt. It was impossible to invent Him. . . . And this perfectly historical image is the image of the perfect man--not of a man, however, who says "I have become God," but of one who says "I am born of God and am sent by Him, I was one with God before the world was made." We are compelled by reason to believe this testimony, for the historical coming of Christ as God made manifest in man is inseparably connected with the whole of the world-process. If the reality of this event is denied, there can be no meaning or purpose in the universe.¹

The positive unity of the world-process can be considered under three aspects: (1) the lower kingdoms form part of the moral order as conditioning its realization; (2) each of the lower forms strives toward a correspondingly higher form; (3) each of the highest forms physically (and psychologically) includes the lower. The task of natural man and humanity is to gather together the universe in idea (as in Greek philosophy); the task of the God-man and the divine humanity is to gather the universe together in reality.²

The Kingdom of God does not, when it appears, abolish the lower types of existence, but puts them all into their right place, no longer as separate spheres of existence but as the spiritually-physical organs of a collected universe, bound together by an absolute inner unity and interaction. This is why the Kingdom of God is identical with the reality of the absolute moral order, or, what is the same thing, with universal resurrection and transfiguration.³

The God-man is the "ideal," but not in the sense that He is not real (cf. plant and clod). He has greater reality as well as greater worth, and infinitely greater power than the Roman Caesar.

The natural man differs from the spiritual not by being devoid of the spiritual element, but by not having the power to realize that element completely. To obtain this power, the spiritual being of man must be fertilized by the effect of what in theology is called grace, which gives the sons of man 'the power to become the children of God.' Even according to orthodox theologians, grace does not abolish nature

¹Ibid., p. 216. The translation is Nathalie Duddington's in The Justification of the Good (London: Constable, 1918).

²Cf. The Epistle to the Ephesians, passim. (Cf. Colossians).

³Works, VIII, 217-19. (Nathalie Duddington's translation.)

in general, or the moral nature of man in particular, but perfects it.

The moral nature of man, and the lower levels of reality, are the conditions of the appearance of the Kingdom of God and the God-man, but not their cause. "Otherwise we should have to admit that the infinite can be the result of the addition of finite magnitudes, that the unconditional can arise out of the conditional, and finally that something can come out of nothing."¹

The divine man differs from the ordinary man not by being a represented ideal but being a realized ideal. The false idealism which takes the ideal to be non-existent, and thinks its realization unnecessary, is not worth criticizing. But there is another question involved here which must be reckoned with. While admitting that the divine or perfect man must have reality, and not merely significance for thought, one may deny the historical fact of His appearance in the past. Such denial, however, has no rational grounds, and moreover it robs the process of universal history of all meaning.²

If Christ was not the realized Ideal, the God-man, He must have been simply the product of natural evolution. But why, then, did not the process of natural evolution go further and produce other Christs, or others greater than Christ, in the past 1900 years? Whom can we honestly compare in moral and spiritual stature with Christ? And those who come closest to Him, like St. Francis, acknowledge their definite dependence on Him as a divine Being.³

The appearance of Christ, therefore, in the middle of human history, rather than at the end, is most significant.

If Christ represents only a relative stage of moral perfection, the absence of any further stages during those almost 2000 years of the spiritual growth of humanity is utterly incomprehensible. If He is the absolutely highest type produced by the process of natural evolution, He ought to have appeared at the end and not in the middle of history.⁴

But the difference between relative and absolute perfection is not of degree, but of quality and essence, and the second cannot logically be derived from the first.

"The meaning of history in its concrete development com-

¹ Works, VIII, 219-22.

² Ibid., p. 222. (Nathalie Duddington's translation.)

³ Ibid., p. 223.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 223 f. (Nathalie Duddington's translation.)

pels us to recognize Jesus Christ not as the last word of the human kingdom but as the first and all-embracing Word of the Kingdom of God--not the man-god but the God-man, or the absolute individual."¹ That is why He appeared in the midst of history. "The purpose of the world-process is the revelation of the Kingdom of God or of the perfect moral order which spiritually grows out of the God-man."² Who must therefore have come first to usher in this order. The first half of history led up to and prepared for the individual coming of Christ; the second half prepares for His universal manifestation and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Here again the general law applies, and Christian history prepares for and conditions, but does not produce that Kingdom.

Christ in His own person by His conquest of sin and death has won the victory over evil--both moral and physical.³ But though the victory has been won at the center, so to speak, it must yet be won at the circumference, in the universe as a whole represented by collective humanity. This is the task of the Church. Christ must become incarnate in all things, material as well as spiritual, in individuals and in the whole social cosmic order. This of course is not simply a physical achievement, but is especially a moral and spiritual achievement, demanding the free co-operation of humanity.⁴

The universal incarnation of the Spirit of Christ or the manifestation of the Kingdom of God requires the consent of the collective will of humanity, that all things should be united to God. In order that this consent should be fully conscious, Christ must be understood not only as the absolute principle of the good, but as the fulness of good. In other words there must be established a Christian (and an anti-Christian) relation to all aspects and spheres of human life.⁵

In order that this human co-operation be free, not forced, Christ has withdrawn His visible presence (though not His invisible power and help) from the scene. The task to be achieved--the decision between absolute good and its opposite--is a social task

¹Ibid., p. 224. (Nathalie Duddington's translation.)

²Ibid.

³The allusion, of course, is to the three Temptations and to the Resurrection.

⁴Works, VIII, 225, and passim.

⁵Ibid., p. 225. (Nathalie Duddington's translation.)

and a social decision. When mankind as a whole is ready for this choice, the (perfected) Kingdom of God will be manifested. Meanwhile it is the task of Christians to bring all things into subjection to the Spirit of Christ, that He may incarnate in all.

Critique of VI. Solovyev's Philosophy of Evolution
and God-Manhood

The conception of God-manhood is one of the most interesting and profound in Solovyev's whole philosophy. Elements like that of Sophia and the World-Soul, which enter into it, might be considered as "myths" (in the Platonic sense, *μῦθος*), without affecting the main conception or its value. It would not seem to be necessary to treat them as such for the eternal, ideal world of Sophia appears to be of real value, as giving God a cosmos, an organism, in which He is eternally operative, a divine body, with a manifold of elements, which make the divine world richer, not poorer, than the temporal world. Yet the conception is not absolutely essential, and the Christian Fathers and theologians generally have identified Sophia with the Logos. The World Soul, too, is of value, as affording a reasonable explanation of the origin of evil which correlates sin and suffering without making God Himself the Author of evil. It also serves to account for the relative imperfection in the world--the seeming blunders such as the formation of the prehistoric monsters, which could not possibly survive, and the like. Yet this conception, likewise, is not essential--indeed there are few teachers of the Church who have held it, and they (like Origen) have sometimes been of doubtful orthodoxy--certainly the doctrine of God-manhood does not depend upon it or require it.

The gradual drawing up of creation to God--in response to the down-reaching activity of God Himself--is assuredly an inspiring view. It gives a goal and purpose to the whole process, including human life, worthy of the magnificent drama of the ages. It gives objective reality to the moral order, with all-in-unity, God, as its center and its end,--an end in which the individual life and value is conserved and perfected, not absorbed or destroyed. The Absolute or God affords a basis for the development of higher and higher forms of being, as well as their goal. The lesser cannot produce the greater; something cannot be created by nothing. The electron cannot account for itself, still less ac-

count for the universe. God can account for both, whether considered as its first beginning or as its final goal and Summum Bonum. Solovyev's conception gives the universe what is so sadly lacking in most modern philosophies, an adequate source and worthy destiny--a raison d'être in both senses. Evolution is possible only because of previous "involution"; only that can be unfolded within the natural world which was originally enfolded from without. And it seems that Solovyev is not far wrong in his supposition that at least life, mind, and spirit are to be regarded as successive "involutions" from above, giving rise to diverse and disparate realms of reality; and of course the Incarnation, the appearance of the God-man Himself within the time-space series, must be so considered. And the Incarnation, once granted, must clearly be not only the highest level of creation thus far, but the final one, since it at once transcends creation and brings it to its fulfillment. All that remains is that that fulfillment accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, should be made universal.

The writer of these pages is well aware that any element of discontinuity, such as the Incarnation involves, is looked on with suspicion by many, but there is a very real parallel between it and the discontinuity in the order of nature itself between the organic and inorganic realms. Another such parallel is the revolution in plant-life by which phototropic nutrition was substituted for chemotropic.¹

The setting of the Incarnation and God-manhood in the context of evolution not only gives a reasonable rationale of the latter but also serves to illuminate the former, by taking away from it any arbitrary, catastrophic element (in the bad sense) and showing that it is not isolated from the world-process as a whole, still less a subversion of it, but its inner sense and final destiny. Once this context is understood, the Incarnation cannot be considered antecedently absurd or unreasonable except on the assumed basis of the non-existence of God (which likewise implies the non-existence or baselessness of reason and sense in the universe, including the human mind, and therefore the senselessness of reasoning about any problem, including this one), or

¹Cf. William Colcord Woods, Emergent Evolution and the Incarnation (Milwaukee: Morehouse, 1929), pp. 25ff.

of a Deistic exclusion of God from the universe or a pantheistic imprisonment of God within the universe or identification with it. All of these views raise more difficulties than they solve.

The emphasis on the "fallen" character of the material universe, with the resulting coarse, exclusive character of its elements (the expression of an underlying spiritual exclusiveness and divisive self-assertiveness), and the reign of discord, division, disease, suffering, and death, is an hypothesis well worthy of weighty consideration, and so too is the correlative emphasis on the redemption of the physical cosmos itself, its resurrection and transfiguration (through Christ), as the ultimate consummation of the process. Alike in his treatment of man's twofold nature, of his social and economic life, of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, Solovyev is far removed from those un-Christian types of spirituality which despise the body and the material universe. His standpoint is at once spiritual and sacramental in the broadest sense. He refuses to consider the body as the $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha - \sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$ (the prison sepulchre of the soul), or to regard the material part of our nature as the "muddy vesture of decay." Spirit manifests its triumph (supremely in the person of Jesus Christ) not by flinging aside its material vehicle (which God spent long aeons in creating) but in redeeming and perfecting it, raising it to its own level (so to speak), making it its ready instrument and shrine. This is a magnificent thought, latent in historic Christianity (though sometimes overshadowed by asceticism of the Oriental variety), but brought into clearest relief and happiest expression by Solovyev.

No less important is the treatment of all-unity in this connection, of the mutual inner penetration of all by all, the organic unity of all creatures with one another and with God through love as the means and freedom as the condition; and of evolution as leading to higher and higher degrees of integration, higher and higher levels of unity, culminating in the Christ who unites God and man, Creator and creation.

One of the most valuable aspects of Solovyev's thought is what one might call its all-conserving quality; he recognizes plainly that the lower levels of being are not destroyed but are conserved on the higher level; thus man retains vegetative and animal (as well as rational) elements in his constitution and humanity is not destroyed but perfected by its union with God.

Each level is the condition--though not the cause--of the higher levels, and persists in them. So too the individual is not to be destroyed but brought to perfection in the social and cosmic organism which grows out of Christ's work of redemption--the universal, all-embracing Church.

The point where many will feel Solovyev to be weakest is in what we might call the apologetics of revelation and in particular of the claims of Christ to be regarded as divine, in the fullest and highest sense of that word. It must be remembered, however, that Solovyev was not primarily a theologian of the schools, and that what is technically known as "Apologetics" seems to have held comparatively little interest for him, unless it was directly connected with some metaphysical problem on the one hand, or some question of urgent ethical or practical import, on the other. It would be interesting to have a detailed discussion by him of the historicity of Jesus Christ, of his character (especially as regards moral perfection) claims, teaching, and miracles, but it is rather too much to expect of one not a professional theologian and apologist to deal with them at length.

Yet more convincing than such a detailed analysis is the fitting in of Christ, on the hypothesis that he is the God-man, with the whole world-process, imparting sense and meaning to it, especially in view of his appearance in the midst of history and not at its beginning or its end. So, too, is the argument from the unrivalled moral perfection of Christ after nineteen centuries, coupled with the fact that those who have come closest to him, definitely acknowledge their dependence on him as on a divine Saviour. All this should be reinforced too by the consideration of Christ as the clue to the meaning of religious history, which is discussed in a later chapter.¹ Of course ultimately the God-manhood of Christ, like the existence of God, cannot be mathematically "proved"; conviction depends upon a number of factors, including especially the moral attitude (toward God or toward Christ) of the person examining his claims. This again does not imply moral condemnation of all who have not, as yet, accepted those claims--no one had greater tenderness and respect for "conscientious unbelief" than Solovyev.² Absolute

¹"Philosophy of History," chap. viii, infra.

²See, for example, his Easter letter by that title, Works, X, 37 ff.

demonstrable certainty, however, belongs only to abstract, formal truths like those of mathematics, which have universal but not concrete significance, or casual facts devoid of universal significance, such as the sunny weather we are having here today.¹ Spiritual truths are spiritually examined and discerned. The nature and quality of the unbelief is all-important. It may be due to pride or sensuality, which finds life simpler without belief in God, Christ, the soul, the resurrection and the like. But it may be due to conscientious doubt, like that of Thomas. In this case, such pseudo-unbelievers will enter the Kingdom of God before a large number of pseudo-believers.²

It may be noted in passing that the Christ of whom Solovyev speaks is the Christ of the Gospels and of Christian experience generally. He is not the modern humanitarian Christ, the Christ who is purely human and nothing more, who was born in the same manner as all other men, whose death was merely a pathetic and touching act of martyrdom or self-sacrifice, who wrought no miracles, and who never rose from the dead, though his disciples thought they saw his ghost or manifestation shortly afterward. The Christ Solovyev presents is the Christ who is at once historic and superhistorical, the Christ whom the Gospels, accepting them for the moment not as inspired documents but simply as ordinary, good history, substantially true (a view which only the most radical and unscientific criticism rejects), portray, the Christ who has been the strength and stay and life of the Christian community down the ages. Yet his Christ is truly human, no less than truly divine--few Christian thinkers have held in such perfect balance the opposite sides of this great truth, as defined by the Councils of the early Church.

Once more it needs to be stressed that with Solovyev the miraculous does not mean a catastrophic subversion of the normal world process. Rather that orderly process of the world is presupposed, and the "miracle"--such as the appearance of life, or man, or the God-man--simply reveals that to which the process was headed all along, and carries it up to the next higher stage. Of course each stage of the process is supernatural (supra naturam) relatively to the stage below it, but there is no conflict between them. The miraculous is thus a sub-class of the

¹Ibid., X, 38.

²Ibid., pp. 38 ff.

supernatural, and the supernatural (whether conceived as the absolute and abiding good or truth or beauty or as the numinous Being that produces in us self-abasement paradoxically combined with self-expansion, creative-feeling, the desire to bow down in worship before It or Him) is probably the conscious or unconscious presupposition of all religion.

Against such a view of miracle as Solovyev holds, a two-fold objection may still be raised. It may be argued that any miracle is contrary to the "laws of nature." This objection is not urged so confidently as it was a generation ago. The conception of inviolable, mechanical uniformity in natural law seems increasingly to be thrown into the discard by modern scientifically-minded thinkers. But it may still be objected that the belief in miracles is due to the delusions of primitive man as a simple-minded savage who has not learned to differentiate fact and fancy, who is ready to believe anything and everything, and who lacks any conception of causality. As a matter of fact it may be doubted whether such a human being exists, or ever has existed, with the possible exception of a few very low-grade morons, and there is not the slightest evidence that belief in miracles among Christians arose on such a basis. We need to remember that the great positive religions, in particular Christianity, took shape in historical times among civilized peoples--also that if the belief in a regular order and causality in events had been lacking or held very loosely, there could not have been any appeal to miracles, in particular the resurrection of Christ as evidence of divine approval and of Christ's divine sonship. Lack of space forbids us to go further into this interesting subject; it is necessary merely to point out that belief in the miraculous and the wider belief in the supernatural is quite consistent with an intelligent and scientific view of the universe. We may go further and say that the truly scientific thinker is the man who is ready to believe in a miracle upon sufficient evidence, not the one who categorically denies the possibility of miracles or who demands evidence which from the nature of the case is impossible or absurd. And not least among the cogent considerations presented in evidence must be the way in which the alleged event fits in with the patterns of things as a whole, with the general order, progress, and tendency observable in the world. It is here that Solovyev is especially valuable.

Another objection that might be made to the Russian philosopher's treatment of the subject is its geocentricity. Is this not clearly contrary to all that modern science, from Copernicus and Galileo on, has taught us? To this it may be replied that Solovyev's teaching is set forth in a form which at times appears geocentric, but this geocentric quality pertains merely to the form, not to the substance. It certainly does not imply the physical centrality of the earth in the universe, and that is all that science is capable of pronouncing upon. The anthropocentric quality of his teaching may present greater difficulty, but we need to remember what emphasis he lays upon the cosmic, universal scope of the Incarnation and the redemption wrought by Christ. If there are beings more or less like man on other planets, they too could share in the benefits of the union between Creator and creation achieved in the person of the God-man. It would be as unfair, therefore, to accuse Solovyev's treatment of being geocentric or anthropocentric, in any invidious sense, as it would be to accuse Christianity itself of being Judaeocentric, because Christ was born a Jew, a charge no one but a fanatical Nazi would be likely to prefer. The physical size or position of this planet is quite beside the point in the appraisal of its spiritual significance, and again this spiritual significance need not at all be narrowly limited to itself, but may, indeed must, be extended to all creation, in view especially of Solovyev's emphasis on all-unity. The same may be said of man, as a union of the spiritual and material orders, and therefore as a microcosm of all creation. What is done in him--especially in the God-man--may subserve not only human but cosmic interests, and so Solovyev plainly holds.

In reality, Solovyev's teaching is neither geocentric nor (in the narrow sense) anthropocentric but Christocentric, and this is not its weakness but its strength. The ultimate nature of the universe he finds in that radiant figure that confronts us in the Gospel and in Christian experience, and he sees in him, in his life, his deeds, his claims supported by his character, and his resurrection, the one who is not simply to judge the world but to life it up to himself, to the level of divine life, and thereby bring it to perfection. The normal conditions of participating in this life and perfection, namely, freedom and love, are repeatedly and justly emphasized--they alone make it possible for Christ to restore (for himself and for all who will freely and

lovingly surrender themselves to him) the shattered unity of creation, and bring it back to God, that he may be all in all. The implications of the Pauline-Johannine-Athanasian conception of Jesus Christ as the "life of all that lives and the light of all that shines" are thus brought to clear philosophic expression by the great Russian thinker, and are set forth not as a mere dogma or an abstract speculation but as the inspiration to victorious living, of self-changing and world-transforming activity, till everything in the world is brought under the rule of Jesus Christ and transfigured by his Spirit.

Appendix to Chapter VII

The Nature of the God-man.--The Incarnation of the divine Word in Christ is the appearance of a new spiritual man, the fount of a new humanity, as much higher than the (purely) human level as man is higher than the (purely) animal kingdom. Christ in the eternal sphere the center of the spiritual organism, enters history to achieve the integration of all in God, becoming the center of history. God the Word becomes human that man (and through him, creation as a whole) may become divine.¹ This is far removed from the legalistic conception of salvation derived by the West from Anselm. (It is vital, not forensic salvation; real, not fictitious.)²

The Incarnation can be considered impossible only on the assumption that God is wholly outside the universe (Deism), or wholly confined by or merged with it (Pantheism). The Incarnation is no more catastrophic ("miraculous") than the appearance of life or the first man in the universe.³

There are three elements in man: (1) the divine, (2) the material, and (3) the rational, distinctively human principle, the bond between the other two. The threefold temptation of Christ is to be considered in relation to these elements.⁴

His victory (won freely) has cosmic scope and significance.⁵

Three evils are experienced by man,--the tyranny of the

¹Cf. Athanasius, etc. The idea is basic in the New Testament and in historic Christianity.

²Works, III, 163 f., and passim.

³Ibid., pp. 164 f.

⁴I.e., in affirming the supremacy of God and the worship due Him alone; in the resistance to the temptation to turn stones into bread to satisfy the demands of the flesh, and the victory over the temptation to gain adherents by marvels (such as hurling Himself from the temple) rather than by rational appeals. Ibid., III, 166-71.

⁵Ibid., pp. 170 ff. Cf. VIII, 224 f.

flesh over the spirit, the tyranny of the mob over the wise man, and the senseless dominion of corruption and death over life. Idealism recognizes the first two as evils and contends against them, but is powerless over the third. But Christ in His invincible spiritual power conquers death also, spiritualizes and perfects the body (the Resurrection). The risen Christ is the fount of the highest level of life, the source of regeneration and resurrection to all.¹

Salvation is life, incorporation into the divine human life of Jesus Christ, the God-man. Therefore the Church had to fight to the death the great rival systems (heresies) which threatened the perfection of the reconciliation and union of the human and the divine in Christ. Hence the services rendered by the seven Ecumenical Councils of the whole Church in setting forth the true doctrine of God-manhood.

I. As opposed to Arianism, the first Council of Nicea (325) proclaimed that Christ is true God; not the highest of creatures.

II. As opposed to Apollinarianism, the Council of Constantinople (381), proclaimed that Christ is perfect man, not one in whom the Logos took the part of the human soul (Nous).

III. As opposed to Nestorianism, the Council of Ephesus (431) proclaimed that Christ is one person, not two. There is an intimate union, not a mere association, of the divine and human natures, in Christ.

IV. As opposed to Monophysitism (and the general trend of Oriental religion) the Council of Chalcedon (451) proclaimed that the human nature of Christ is not destroyed or impaired by its union with the Godhead. Human nature is united to God not absorbed into God.

All of these dogmas have vital bearing for ourselves, and our union with God in and through Christ.

V. The Second Council of Constantinople (553) continued and made more clear the decisions of the Council of Ephesus.

VI. As opposed to Monothelitism, the Third Council of Constantinople (681) asserted that Christ had two wills (one divine and one human), as well as two natures. Thus human liberty is preserved, not obliterated, in its union with the

¹Ibid., VIII, 265, 270-77.

divine.

VII. As opposed to Iconoclasm, the Second Council of Nicea (787) upheld the legitimacy of expressing the divine, as revealed in the Incarnation, in human art; in other words, it taught the (potential) sanctity of the material world as a vehicle of the divine, as opposed to false types of spirituality which despise the physical.

All of these have significance for the social, as well as the spiritual life of humanity.

Belief in God and belief in man are reconciled in the God-man.¹

¹La Russie, pp. xxv-xxviii. Cf. pp. 321-36.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALL-UNITY

The central thread of Solovyev's whole philosophy, as we have seen, is the conception of all-unity, of the One that embraces (without absorbing or destroying) all, possesses yet transcends all being. It is only in virtue of this all-embracing unity that knowledge itself is possible, due to the mutual immanence of subject and object, and the inner penetration by both of the Absolute Subject of Being who is at the same time the Absolute Object of knowledge. It is only by transferring the center of our own individual being to the Absolute, transcendent center of all being, that the knowledge of truth, reality, can be attained. Thus, truth, but also goodness and beauty, are conditioned by all-unity. Truth is sacrificed when one element is left out or exaggerated or when one or more elements are isolated from all; beauty is impossible without the harmonious unity and symmetry of all--the isolation, exaggeration, or omission of one element destroys or mars the beauty of the whole; goodness is the right relation of the individual and society, the part and the whole, the one and the all. Truth, beauty, and goodness, then, are all conditioned by all-unity, and all find their source and fulfilment in the One that contains and embraces all, the Absolute or God. The all-embracing unity, as the very term implies, is concrete and abstract; it has a place for the many as well as for the one, and this co-existence of the one and the many finds its ultimate root and basis in the very nature of the Absolute God himself, as a Tri-une Being, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The perfection of unity exists without detriment to the real plurality; the perfection of fellowship conditions, and is conditioned by, the perfection of personality.

The original all-unity of the divine Being is faithfully mirrored in the world of Sophia and was meant to be likewise reflected in the temporal world. But the fall of the World-Soul has broken (in large measure, not entirely) the union of the

World Soul and its component elements with one another. The disruption of space and time as we know them, the reign of division, discord, competition, strife, suffering, disease, and death, are the results. Yet there still remains a minimum of unity beneath which the world cannot sink; all are still bound together, even at the lowest level, in a system of mechanical causality, upon which as a basis higher levels of unity and of movement toward God may arise. And this actually comes to pass--evolution which bears so markedly the signs of struggle and disruption everywhere, is at the same time the means by which these are healed, and the world gradually returns to God, in response to his gracious activity. The microcosm of the entire process is man, in whom the World-Soul finds an adequate embodiment, a free agency for the return to God. Man sums up and recapitulates all the lower stages of reality.

Man's sin again frustrates the cosmic movement God-ward, and only the descent into the cosmic-historic process of the divine Logos, the Son of God, as the consummation of world evolution and human history alike, makes possible the free and perfect union of God and man, Creator and creation. Here all-unity is still preserved, neither the divine nature nor the human destroys or absorbs the other. The union is a true one, conditioned by the freedom of both. So in the whole process of God-Manhood, which grows out of the life, death, and resurrection of the God-Man, grace does not destroy nature but perfects it. So in the Universal Church, the Body of Christ, individually and nationally are not suppressed but brought to fulfilment; the antagonisms of the various men, nations, and races are to be removed, but their differences are to be conserved for their mutual benefit. The tension of the individual and the social, of the local and the universal, is to be overcome without sacrificing either.

Human sin again mars the movement toward all-unity, and the division of the Universal Church is nothing less than a cosmic calamity. It is necessary that the Church (and humanity in it) should reproduce the perfect all-embracing unity of Christ, the God-Man, who stood in the right relation to what was above him (God the Father), to what was below him (physical nature), and to what was on a level with him as man (his fellow-man, society). Subjection to the first, mastery of the second, issuing in its resurrection and transfiguration, and the unification in lib-

erty of the third (in the Church), are the norms attained and manifested by the God-Man. The one Body with the many members, where all are members of one another because all are members of Christ, is ideally, and is meant to be actually, the pattern of the perfect human society; of organic unity in freedom and diversity. So too the triumph of the God-Man over the divisive forces of sin and death--a triumph reaching its climax in his victorious resurrection from the dead--is to be extended to the whole creation. The Holy Eucharist, in which bread becomes the sacramental Body of Christ, and those who receive it worthily become the mystical Body of Christ, is the type and pledge of universal transfiguration. The whole of humanity, the whole cosmos, is meant to be transformed with its own free consent and coöperation (individually and collectively), into the Body of Christ, the living Temple filled with his Spirit, where unity and diversity, harmony and freedom coexist, and where God is all in all. This free, perfect, all-embracing unity is the final goal of the drama of the world-process. The second coming of Christ will at once end history and bring it to a worthy conclusion. The whole creation which now groans and travails together in pain, awaiting the redemption of the body, is to be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

This all-embracing quality is faithfully reflected in Solovyev's own writings. Take, for example, his conception of Christianity. A brilliant Chinese scholar¹ finds three principal conceptions of Christianity which have gained supremacy at one time or another: the metaphysical, the mystical, and the ethical.

The view that regards history as a divine drama, converging upon and radiating from one point, viz., the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is typical of the first. This includes St. Paul, Augustine, Calvin, and the "Barthian" movement on the continent of Europe. The view that regards the Christian life as the soul's communion with God and the view that regards the Church as a divine, human, mystical fellowship, are illustrative of the second. This includes St. John, all the great mystics of the Medieval ages, and the present Church-centric groups, such as the Eastern Orthodox and the Anglo-Catholics. Lastly, the third view is represented by all those who regard the transformation of the individual (individual gospel) and of society (social gospel) as the central task of Christianity. This is the line of tra-

¹P. C. Hsu, A Traffic in Knowledge (New York: Association Press, 1931), p. 93.

dition from St. James through the evangelists, social reformers, down to W. Rauschenbusch.¹

One has only to read this description to see how perfectly the great Russian philosopher belongs to each of these groups yet unites and transcends them all. The all-embracing quality of his religion is its prime quality, his anxiety to show that integral Christianity cannot despise or neglect any element of truth held by any group of Christians--or even non-Christians. Christ for him is the embodiment and fulfilment of the desires and aspirations of all peoples, all mankind.

But the all-embracing unity, which forms the center of Solovyev's philosophy, is clearly manifested in all his thought, not simply in religion. Thus the rationalistic, the empirical, and the mystical trends are all united in his philosophy; philosophy in its turn is synthesized with science and theology to form a free theosophy (where no element is suppressed or exclusively asserted). The political, the economic, and the religious elements (which in their abstract or exclusive self-assertion are represented by etatism, socialism, and clericalism) are to be freely and harmoniously combined in a free theocracy. So too the intuition of the mystic, the inspiration of the artist, and the labors of the technical expert, are to be synthesized in a free theurgy, aiming at the creative transformation of all life in the light of the vision of Sophia. Wholeness of thought and wholeness of life characterize the outlook of Solovyev. Partial one-sided exclusiveness and the cult of the abstract universal, which forgets or crushes out the particular and individual, are equally alien to him. This wholeness of thought and life, reinforced and ignited as it is by a flaming love for God and man--and for him in whom they both meet, the God-Man--is the pledge of a deathless quality in his work, a quality for which the torn and dismembered world of our time is starving.

¹Ibid.

